

Choosing an Appropriate Tree

Every tree species has its good points as well as its negatives. Learn all that you can, make an informed decision and choose the most appropriate tree for your location.

What is the width of the area? If the width of the planting strip is less than 5 feet, only a small size tree is allowed. See the chart below to choose an appropriately sized tree.

Are there overhead or underground utility lines? Overhead utility lines limit the size of the tree that can be planted beneath them. A tree that grows into the wires could cause disruption of utility service to your neighborhood during a storm. Often, a utility company will have to prune a tree to allow for the unimpeded passage of the wires through the canopy of the tree. It is best to avoid these problems by selecting and planting the correct tree for your location.

Do you prefer an evergreen or deciduous tree? Deciduous trees often have the benefit of autumn color before the leaves drop each fall. They are also more energy efficient as they provide shade in the summer but do not block the winter sun. Evergreen trees still drop leaves, either periodically through the year (like the southern magnolia) or as the new leaves are emerging in the spring (like the live oak). But they are never completely bare.

Should you choose a flowering tree, a fruiting tree or a shade tree? After taking into account the space limitations of your planting location, the answer depends a lot on personal preference and your aggravation threshold. A crape myrtle provides colorful blooms all summer, but some people consider the flowers a nuisance as they drop onto cars and sidewalks. Berries attract birds, but also bird poop. The shade provided from a live oak tree can be very welcome in our hot New Orleans summers, but the live oak often demands more room than is available, buckling adjacent sidewalks and encroaching onto roofs of neighboring structures.

How do you pick the spot to plant the tree? There are standards for minimum distances between where you plant the tree and existing features along your street. Plant no closer than 25 feet from a corner intersection or 5 feet from a driveway, so that the tree won't block visibility and become a traffic hazard. Allow at least 20 feet between a tree and a light pole. You do not want the tree to block the light and create dark spots at night. Stay at least 10 feet away from a fire hydrant. Keep an area at least 4 feet in width by 7 feet in height clear for pedestrians along the sidewalk. A tree should never be allowed to impede pedestrian movement.

TREES FOR PLANTING STRIPS OF 2 ½ FT. TO 5 FT. WIDTH AND UNDER LOW UTILITY LINES

Nellie Stevens Holly	Fringe Tree
Foster's Holly	Silverbell
Savannah Holly	Possum-Haw Holly
Dahoon Holly	Crape Myrtle
American Holly	Japanese Magnolia
Yaupon	Chinese Pistachio
Spruce Pine	Japanese Evergreen Oak
Ironwood	Sweetbay Magnolia

TREES FOR PLANTING STRIPS OVER 5 FT. WIDTH AND WHERE NO UTILITY LINES EXIST

Live Oak	White Ash	Shumard Oak
Nuttall Oak	Ginkgo	American Elm
Willow Oak	Eastern Red Cedar	Winged Elm
Bald Cypress	White Oak	Cedar Elm
Lacebark Elm	Cherrybark Oak	Sawtooth Oak
Chinese Chestnut	Southern Red Oak	Dawn Redwood
Catalpa	Overcup Oak	Western Soapberry
Green Ash	Swamp Chestnut Oak	Basswood